

## THE NATURAL ASSETS OF THE VLORA REGION, THEIR ROLE IN THE TOURISM OFFER

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### ABSTRACT

**Summary:** The study examined the role of natural resources for the development of tourist offers of Vlora District supported by the geo-area that it covers

**Firstly:** we will analyze the favorable geographical and geostrategic position, emphasizing on its role in the development of this region, enabling communication of this county with not only the adjacent geographical areas, but also beyond them.

**Secondly:** we will discuss the role of geological and mineral construction, landscape conditions with its features, climate and its elements, hydro assets and objects, flora and fauna, which enable the development of different types of tourism and a Perennial tourism. It will also be discussed the role of the natural heritage of this geo-area, which have acquired the status of protection by law, in the development of different types of tourism.

**Thirdly:** we will discuss the development that nowadays tourism has taken in this geographical space and observe the trends for the future, enabling a better management of resources and minimizing the problems encountered in these years.

**KEYWORDS:** Geo-Area Natural Resources, Protection Status, Resource Management, Tourist Offer

### INTRODUCTION

#### Methodology

Through the identification of physical and geographical conditions of the District of Vlora and their features, we would establish their role and importance in the tourist offer of this geo-area. The space under the study provides natural potential for perennial tourism. Economic evaluation of natural (space in the study) aims to direct recognition, definition and presentation of natural resources in the function of the economic and demographic development (tourism that is analyzed in this study).

Emphasis will be placed on problems encountered during the period of democratic transition in maintaining these assets and their management.

### THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF DISTRICT OF VLORA AND ITS ROLE

The district of Vlora lies in southwestern Albania, south of the downstream flow of Vjosa river and is part of two major physic-geographical units: Western Region (Granary of Vlora, Topallta and Selenica hills) and all Southern Region all the southwestern part up to the state border. In terms of organizing administrative – territorial point, District of Vlora consists of three districts: Vlora ( $1609 \text{ km}^2$ ), Saranda ( $758 \text{ km}^2$ ) and Delvina ( $351 \text{ km}^2$ ), of seven municipalities: Vlora, Selenica, Oricum and Himara (in the District Vlora), Saranda and Konispol (in Saranda) and Delvina (Delvina district) from 19 municipalities which are organized in 198 villages. According to the districts there are respectively 98 villages

organized in 9 municipalities in Vlora district, 62 villages in seven municipalities in Saranda district and 38 villages in three municipalities in the District of Delvina.<sup>1</sup>

The centre of the county is the city of Vlora, an industrial, commercial, educational center and multiple connections. It is an ancient main port of the country and holds the "keys" of the gate (channel) of Otranto<sup>2</sup>. In the ancient times the city of Vlora was called Aulona. Early tracks and numerous archaeological findings belong to the sixth century B.C. According to researchers, the ruins of a fortress with walls of hewn stone, length 40 m, height 75 m and 2 m thickness, found over the years, provide the most complete picture of the ancient city.<sup>3</sup>

The territory of Vlora District has a total surface area 2706 km<sup>2</sup>, length overall border is about 297 km from its approximately 11 km border state borders, bordering by land with 129 km, 75 km by boundary river and 144 km by a long coastline.<sup>4</sup> Vlora District as an important center and city port of the country is only 72 km away from Italy (Otranto Channel) and 77 miles to Greece (Corfu Island).<sup>5</sup> This geographical position of District of Vlora is a very important natural factor for the development of traffic infrastructure, establishing transit centers or points of trade turnover (in Delvin in eastern branching road crossings in Gjirokastra in Greece and towards the coast of Saranda).

The value of this position is more than understandable and justifiable. With the construction of Corridor 10 the value will intensify and multiply all aspects of life in the study area. Developing transport and trade infrastructure will further advance the development of tourism and other services in this area. The wide exit to the sea and the area, which connects the Strait of Otranto with two peninsulas: the Apennine and Balkan, has made this city an important marine and terrestrial point of connection.<sup>6</sup> The economic evaluation of natural (space in the study) potential aims to directly recognize, define and present the natural resources functioning in the economic and demographic development (tourism opportunity is analyzed). This evaluation also serves collection of the necessary information for local authorities (in order to better allocate funds with the reserves in order to get optimal results from the use of this potential) and for different businesses (it is known that information is the soul of development).

## **THE PHYSICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Potential Geological and Landscape Features to Support Tourism**

The area under the study belongs to the paleo-geographic and petrologic evolution of the Ionian area, Sazan area and a small portion in the north of the study area (syncline of Myzeqe) belongs to a different tectonic unit of the lower order than areas, which are pre-mountainous foothills or close to Adriatic sea<sup>7</sup>, which include areas outside of Southern Albanides.

The Vlora Bay Region is evaluated in terms of lithological like limestone, starting from the Jurassic to the Neogene limestone. Limestone appears in the form of massive and compact partially marbled tiles. In these rocks are developed groundwater and surface karst formations as wells, gaps and other interesting forms to tourism. From the construction point of view it should be noted that the specific formation of this area is related to building "serious" tourist

<sup>1</sup> Profili i Qarkut Vlorë, Tiranë 2003, faqe 31

<sup>2</sup> Krutaj, F., Gaçe, B., Abazi, H.: *Vlora porti jugor i Adriatikut*, Tiranë, 2001, faqe 3

<sup>3</sup> Gjide, P., "Vendlindja ime", Tiranë 2008, faqe 56

<sup>4</sup> Abazi, H."Të njohim vendlindjen", SHBLSH, Tiranë 1979, faqe 16

<sup>5</sup> Krutaj, F., Gaçe, B., Abazi, H."Vlora porti jugor i Adriatikut", Tiranë 2001, faqe 3

<sup>6</sup> Vlora, Guidë, 2006, faqe 49

<sup>7</sup> Qiriazi, Perikli, Gjeografia Fizike e Shqipërisë, Tiranë, 2001, faqe 11

structures.<sup>8</sup> It is recommended the construction of residential areas and small tourism villages. It is not recommended the construction of reasonably large hotel buildings, etc.

In the framework of the elements of the physical environment of great interest for life and human activity, is the relief. Paleo-geographic development features of the study area, lithological composition and numerous exogenous factors have determined the characteristics and landscape features.

The district of Vlora relief is generally exposed toward the west and southwest direction. The exposure is important in terms of agriculture, because this type of exposure (west-southwest) has helped in the cultivation of olives and citrus. This stretch is characteristic of the ascending Coast Mountains from the Vlora Bay to the neck of Drashovica to the mount of Çika (2045 m). From this mountain, they descend until they turn into low hills west of the Delvina valley.<sup>9</sup> The collection of these factors taken in conjunction with each other, help to record, analyze and explain presence of a diversified landscape in this space, with a high diversity, from the variety of its forms.

The sheer diversity in terms of horizontal and vertical space offers the population good opportunities for exploitation and development in several directions. So with characteristics and landscape features (morphological, morphometric and morphological) owns conditions of very good development opportunities for agricultural economy, agro-industry, communication, tourism in general and some of his particular types (coastal, cultural, river, green, mountain, etc.).

### Climate Assets as Natural Resources in the Service of Tourist Offer

Climate characteristics of the study area are a result of the collaboration of cosmic factors (solar radiation, size and its regime), impact of planets on creating climate anomalies and local factors: the contour features (configuration and orientation of general NW-SE mountain ranges and river valleys), the presence of hills and valleys with gorges that connect the gorges with inner areas (softens the effect of the mountain side), but a major role also plays the proximity to the sea which mitigates the effects of extreme climate.<sup>10</sup>

Vlora district is part of the Mediterranean climatic zone with mild winters and relatively wet and dry summers, which as is known, in addition stimulates the activity of human physiological functions.<sup>11</sup>

First, we will highlight the pronounced character of Mediterranean climate, expressed in the presence of a mild and wet winters and hot and dry summers. The highest monthly amount of radiation in general belongs to the months of July and August.

**Table 1:**<sup>12</sup> Monthly and Annual Quantities of the Total Radiation in kwh / m<sup>2</sup> Per Month

Pl. of Measure -ment	Monthly Averages												$\sum$ Yr/Hrs
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Vlora	70.06	71.22	101.97	144.38	179.98	204.44	221.69	208.89	163.21	118.22	83.41	79.84	1646.81
Xarra	100.67	126.48	137.38	221.17	251.28	253.39	259.42	242.03	188.83	145.45	115.68	97.62	2189.40

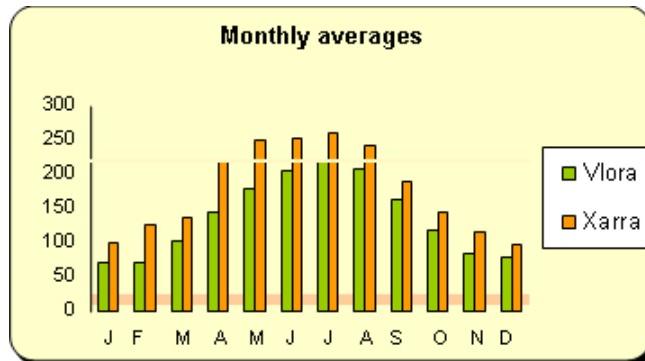
<sup>8</sup> Masterplan i veprimitarive turistike në Qarkun e Vlorës, SHB Fast Edit di Acquaviva Picena, 2002, faqe 30

<sup>9</sup> Qiriazi, P. *Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë*, Tiranë, 2001, faqe 29

<sup>10</sup> Profili i Qarkut Vlorë, Tiranë 2003, faqe 23

<sup>11</sup> Krutaj,F.,Gaçe, B., Abazi, H."Vlora porti jugor i Adriatikut", Tiranë 2001, faqe -25

<sup>12</sup> Akademie e Shkencave të RPSSH. *Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë*. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1990, faqe 171



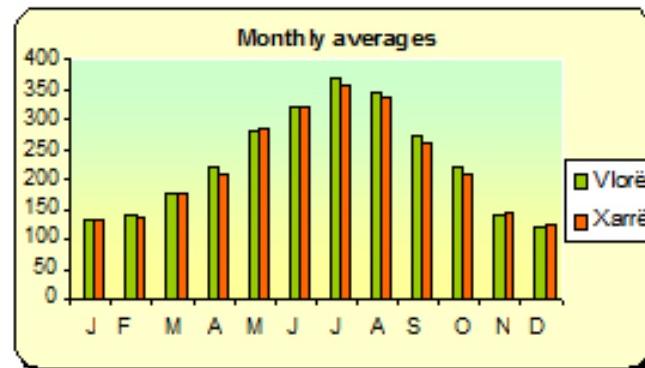
Graph 1

Sun light duration in hours takes the average annual value of 2734 hours in Vlora to 2696 hours in Xarrë. Referring to the comparison of the values above states that this region differs tremendously in the amount of sunny hours. According to months, the lower values are observed in December which coincide with the smaller astronomical length of the day. Maximum averages are set in June, July-August with an average of 340 hours so an average of 11.5 hours of sunshine per day.

**Secondly**, the climate in this area is characterized by large climate assets: average annual amount of solar radiation is 1500 (1481.65 kWh / m<sup>2</sup>), the annual amount of sunshine hours (actual length of Sunning) is 2500 (2437 for Vlora station) hours, the annual amount calculated on sunny days over 320 days, the number of days without sun (cloudiness) calculated at 42.2 days, and the effective amount of active temperatures 4400 -, the average annual amount of precipitation varies from about 1000 mm (989.mm, in Kuç up to 2000 mm).

Table 2: <sup>13</sup>The Actual Time of the Sunning in Hours (Mean 25 years, 1956-1980)

Place of Measurement	Monthly Average												$\sum$ Yearly
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Vlora	131	138	179	220	281	324	370	344	270	218	140	119	2734
Xarra	133	136	177	210	283	320	359	337	262	209	146	124	2696



Graph 2

Distribution of sunny days (see Table No. 2) shows that from May to September there are not observed any days without sunning. The largest number of these days is observed in summer and the lowest in winter, which shows the compliance of sunny days with the distribution of the quantities of the sunny hours.

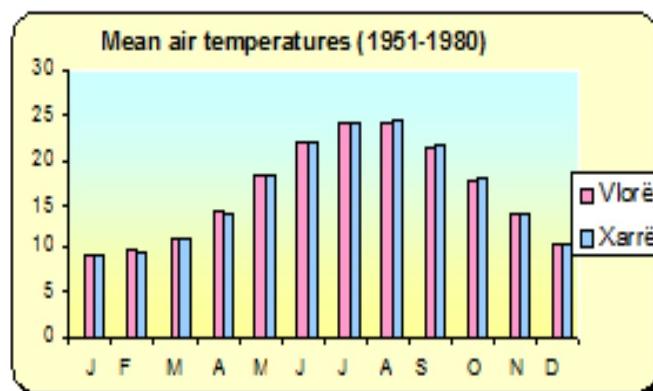
**Thirdly**, the climate in this area is also distinguished for pronounced capricious character, high fluctuations of all the climate element value of their perennial average. In March 1987, the recorded temperature in Vlora was (6.3 ° C), while in Borshi (-1 ° C)

<sup>13</sup> Akademia e Shkencave të RPSSH. Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1990, faqe 173

**Fourthly**, the climate here is also distinguished for the great diversity of micro areas with separate climate. We present this feature through the following example, Shushica valleys, Kalasa, Çipini area, Çika, Vërmiku, Bolena, etc., in terms of climate are not only separate climate microzones along with expressed Mediterranean features, but also have a sensitive impact on the continental area. In these mountainous areas there are conditions for the development of mountain tourism, white tourism, etc. Temperatures affect directly and indirectly the activity of living of the population and more so, to treat the problem we are stating, tourism with all its possible types. Average temperatures for many years in the study territory range from 16.1 ° C in Vlora to 17.6 ° in Saranda<sup>14</sup>. Geographical distribution range of annual average temperatures for the territory in the study is presented in the table that follows.

**Table 3:**<sup>15</sup> Perennial Average Air Temperatures (1951-1980)

Stations	Months												Mean Annual	Amp Year.
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII		
Vlora	9.1	10.0	11.4	14.4	18.3	22.0	24.1	24.2	21.6	17.9	14.1	10.8	16.5	15
Xarra	9.2	9.9	11.4	14.0	18.3	22.0	24.2	24.6	21.8	18.0	14.0	10.8	16.5	15.5



**Graph 3**

According to the seasons, in the winter the mean yearly temperature starts from 9.1°C in Vlora, to 9.2°C in Xarra. In the summer the temperatures vary from 24.2°C in Vlora to 24.6°C in Xarra.

**Table 4: The Mean Climate Indicators for the District of Vlora**

City	Precipitation mm	Avarage Temp	Sunny Days	Rainy Days	Cloudy Days
Vlora	1675mm	15.2 °C	229	44	95
Saranda	1532 mm	16.1 °C	230	41	94
Delvina	1360 mm	15.2 °C	230	41	94

In the territory under study, the average annual rainfall is high, it reaches 1200 mm rainfall annually, most of which falls in November-December. In this period in the village of Kuc the rainfall measured is 380 mm compared to 404 mm of the Albanian Alps. Sea and landscape forms have a significant impact on the distribution of rainfall in the study area. Changes in the area distribution of rainfall are also observed in their distribution among the three districts of the county, where Vlora stands for the greatest amount of annual precipitation with 1675 mm, Saranda with 1532 mm and Delvina with 1360 mm.<sup>16</sup>

The geographical position of District of Vlora, enables the area to be under the influence of strong winds, which differ from the power and their presence during the year. Knowing the wind direction and their speed is a direct use to the

<sup>14</sup> Abazi,H. "Të njohim vendlindjen", SHBLSH, Tiranë 1979, faqe 57

<sup>15</sup> Akademie e Shkencave të RPSSH. Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1990, faqe 185

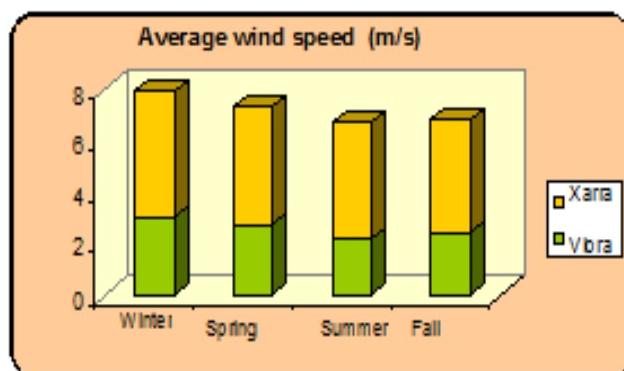
<sup>16</sup> Profili i Qarkut Vlorë, Tiranë 2003, faqe 23

movement of boats, whether light weight or tourism ones, as yachts etc. At the same time this serves the field of construction, residences or vacation areas, tourist centers and their entertainment infrastructure facilities.<sup>17</sup>

In the territory under the study the data indicate that winds that happen more during the year are of an wide L form, (they are more typical for Vlora district, but the city is protected from the wind) and SW which blow from October to March period, the SE and S blow more during the spring season, the NW and W blow in the period from June to September, the SE and NE direction that follow to some extent the direction of mountain ranges and valleys. For e. g in the Vlora station the East winds occupy 15.2%, NW winds 10.6%, while 7.2% the Southern direction. For Xarra station, the large contingency of 43.2% belongs to Northern direction, SW with 16.9%, 11.9% for the Southern direction, and 7.9% NW direction. The landscape exerts its influence not only over the direction of the wind but also on its speed. This area is characterized by strong winds due to the configuration of the landscape and the Gulf of Vlora. Everybody remembers those extraordinary winds of April 1970, when recorded a speed of 120 km / hour.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 5:**<sup>19</sup> The Avarage Wind Speed in m/s

Stations	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Annual
Vlora	3.0	2.7	2.2	2.4	2.6
Xarra	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.6



**Graph 4**

The territory of the District of Vlora is characterized by a dense hydrographic network that is expressed in a variety of water facilities; running water surfaces represented by a dense network of rivers and streams, groundwater, springs, artificial objects (irrigation canals and drainage, reservoir basins), etc. with special hydrological, hydro and thermal features. The presence of abundant water, total water reserves, annual and spatial distribution of their feeds, physical-chemical, etc., constitute a natural heritage of great importance to human activity as; the source of life, an important factor for the creation and deployment of urban centers, development of agriculture, industry (particularly energetic industry); tourism for sunbathing, water sports or recreational values of the spaces around the water surface; treatment of some diseases using physical-chemical properties of specific water resources, etc. According to these qualities, the study territory is very rich in hydropower reserves of valuable physical-chemical and socio-tourist properties. The significant hydro reserves in this area make it a necessity to improve their management, the use of this potential prior to discharge into the sea, as this issue of resources remains a key problem. Area lagoon ecosystems of the study zone ( $71.1 \text{ km}^2$ ) are important areas for fishing, salt extraction, tourism, as well as inhabitation area with numerous water birds.

<sup>17</sup> Buletini Shkencor i Universitetit të Vlorës, Nr 8, 2006, faqe 41

<sup>18</sup> Masterplan i veprimtarive turistike në Qarkun e Vlorës, SHB Fast Edit di Acquaviva Picena, 2002, faqe 39

<sup>19</sup> Akademie e Shkencave të RPSSH. Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë. Vëllimi I, Tiranë, 1990, faqe 178

The emergence to two vast seas enables the development of trade, fishing and tourism, whose development is given priority given the potential that this space offers.

In conclusion, the typology of aquatic ecosystem hydrology and watershed basin surface water and groundwater in the area of Vlora District, constitute a considerable potential. The assessment of aquatic ecosystem and their use should be made in such a way that they do not harm the ecological and hydro technical balance of the study area.

The edaphic-pedological conditions (physical-chemical composition of the soil), hydrology, topography (relief, slope, slope exposure, altitude), climate (energy, temperature, etc.), have defined a biodiversity of the living world expressed in a mosaic of fauna and flora with significant landscape value and diverse use in the economy.

The evaluation of this natural environment element is a necessity in order to identify stocks and options it provides for the development of agriculture and animal husbandry, forestry, rural tourism and other vital activities.

The Vlora District vegetation is diverse due to various forms of relief, climate and microclimate. Of 208 species of trees across the country, more than 150 are found in this area.<sup>20</sup> The Mediterranean scrub oaks dominate mostly around this area. Above them are situated Mediterranean pines, fir types especially those of Macedonia. The greater heights are occupied by rare alpine areas and characterized by expressed xerophytes features. The animal world is another valuable asset to the geographical environment in economic terms. This value is related to the development of hunting, meeting the needs of some food, but also represents a real opportunity for the development of tourism, given that the turnover of selected tourist types of wild fauna constitute exclusive motifs of resort development, for which are paid high prices. Since hunting tourism is possible in the region, not all the animals can profit from this function. For this purpose is recommended the classification of fauna in three categories:

- Rare animals that are considered "the bench of nature" of this region as the gazelle, its hunting is explicitly prohibited. Their function remains only cognitive, observant and curious for scholars, visitors and admirers of nature. To help with this need and must be built special observation places.
- Animals at risk as the chamois and wild boar, the marten, the squirrel, the otter, the pelican, their hunting should be banned for a period of time. Their areas are considered as "areas prohibited by law."
- Animals that can be hunted within their hunting season as rabbits, turtles and other birds. In addition to the hunting free zones, there is the need to define the zones for their reproduction<sup>21</sup>

The animal number is depleted, especially mammals, due to the rare forest and hunting which is increasingly unchecked. The high mountain peaks covered in forest and still rich in fauna are an exception. The use of some pesticides to combat pests of agricultural crops has also affected the systematic reduction of fauna, especially in low areas along the valleys and hilly areas. Wild animals are greatly moving from these areas to other more quiet and convenient areas. Thus the rabbit, the wild boar, the deer, etc. are getting rarer and rarer in this basin.

Before 1990s, hunting of the animals was strictly controlled and rarer. After these years, illegal hunting has been completely uncontrolled, which reduced the number of wild animals nearly 10 times. The lack of a regulatory framework to monitor the situation and partly the poverty of the place are the recent factors of the fauna situation in this region. This situation indicates the determination of certain measures such as setting regulatory alternatives through effective

<sup>20</sup> Profili i Qarkut të Vlorës, Tirana, 2003, faqe 21

<sup>21</sup> Draçi B. Potenciali turistik i rajonit Vjosë-Deti Jon (Monografi). Tirana, 1998, faqe 63

techniques for those who rely on illegal means and creating specific reserves of hunting as a consideration of a certain revitalization of rural areas and opportunities for tourism development.

With these natural resources presented to Vlora County, related to the beautiful Mediterranean landscapes, with its interesting forms of relief, the rich and diverse the hydrography , its coast as a rare beauty as well as the values of multiple treatment, the most suitable climate with high temperatures and long vegetation period, are considered strong support for the development of geo-tourism.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Vlora region has favorable geographical and geostrategic position
- The region has a mountainous and hilly landscape of various forms, Mediterranean climate with long vegetation period, the hydrograph of a rich and diverse world of flora and fauna
- These areas have acquired the status of protection by law and are declared priority areas of tourism development
- The natural protection is a strategic goal of particular importance for many reasons: It is an area where little is done to improve, while the negative phenomena that bring destruction are increasing and not controlled
- Increasing the community awareness for the protection of the environment
- Protection from the erosion
- Controlling and reducing urban pollution
- Maintaining and enhancing the fish farming
- Maintaining and increasing of wild fauna
- Adding, conserving and utilizing the forest area etc.

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